

Arguments Against Annexations

Presented by
COMMISSIONER W. P. WHITSETT

Before a Joint Meeting of the Mayor, City
Council and Board of Water and Power
Commissioners, City of Los Angeles

NOVEMBER 20, 1925

Issued by
THE BANK OF VAN NUYS
VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA

IT IS unsound economically and it is courting disaster to spread the present water supply of the City of Los Angeles over newly annexed territories to such an extent that there will be no water for the unimproved lots now within the City when built on, or which may cause a pronounced shortage affecting all the people of the City.

There is in the neighborhood of two hundred thousand lots, unimproved, with water mains already installed. These are sufficient, when fully improved, to make another City the present size of the City of Los Angeles.

Had these lots required their full pro rata of water the past summer, Los Angeles would have been discredited before the world on account of water shortage. Financial loss would have resulted, not only to Los Angeles itself but to all of Southern California.

These outlying communities can be short of water, (as they were during the past summer), and this shortage will scarcely be heard of outside of their own town limits. Annex them to Los Angeles and let the same shortage occur in this City and that fact will be telegraphed and radioed to the four corners of the world, creating adverse publicity and doubt that cannot be lived down in a decade.

Annex these communities to the City of Los Angeles and instead of going out severally and effectively fighting to bring to Southern California the Colorado River water they will burn up their energies before the honorable City Council and this Board of Commissioners fighting for a share of the water already allocated.

As municipal units suffering from water shortage, they are powerful allies to us but as annexed territory they add to our burdens, destroy our peace and hinder our progress.

Now take a glance at the engineer's phase of this annexation subject.

What would you say if it were seriously proposed to dismantle and destroy every one of the reservoirs we have built, I mean, including Haiwee, Chatsworth, St. Francis, and all of them.

Yet, at this time, when the agricultural uses in the San Fernando Valley already have to be curtailed at times, the policy of annexing additional territory not only destroys the millions of dollars of agricultural by-products from that valley, but

from the engineering phase it is equal to the total loss of all the reservoirs we have built.

I mean, that the agricultural irrigation seepage is what fills and regulates our gravel bed reservoir in the San Fernando Valley and this natural saturation reservoir, which annexation of more territory will triple and all but destroy, now contains a reserve of over 158,000 acre feet, which is greater than all the man made structures we have erected.

From gravel bed reservoirs of the San Fernando Valley we pumped and perhaps saved the situation this year. Without it we might have lost.

Dry those gravels by further curtailment of irrigation and, with one stroke, you have produced a greater calamity than the destruction of all the reservoirs we have yet constructed.

Those two phases, the political and engineering, to my mind preclude the possibility of us entering upon the suicidal course of any further annexation until the Colorado River problem is solved.

But beyond these facts are the moral and economic aspects of the subject: Morally, we have two hundred thousand unoccupied lots within the present City to attract new population, and banking and business interests are adjusted to and based upon the natural expectancy of this new population. Multiply this present water supply deficit by further annexations and you violate all the morals of the question and crumble the financial foundations of the community.

From the constructive side of the question, I would say that we should proceed to the solution of the Colorado River problem with these neighbor units as allies.

The limited waters we now have should continue to be regulated to the best welfare of the social structure we have already formed here in the name of Los Angeles, upon the credit of which name the whole Southland is more or less anchored.

From this rightful policy we will derive many benefits. Continue to spread the water, in periods of surplus, through irrigation use, into the gravel beds of the San Fernando Valley as a great reserve for critical periods like last summer, and, as a by-product of that irrigation spreading, the community will benefit in addition to the reserve water supply in the gravel beds as follows:

First: An annual food supply today of twenty

million dollars, that can soon be increased to fifty million dollars, all of which now remains in our own financial channels and which, if destroyed, will cause double that amount to leave the trade channels of this City and go to outside points.

Second: The maintenance of a social welfare reserve, where the twenty-five thousand unemployed families of the city of Los Angeles today can be and are being absorbed at the only job that GOD made big enough to go around, that is home and market gardening on the outskirts of a big city.

Third: After the arrival of the Colorado water, and the removal of the direful necessity of maintaining the gravel bed reserves, we have then ample provision for city growth in the San Fernando area, which is already a part of Los Angeles and equipped with steel mains that will subdivide into five hundred thousand residence lots upon the floor of the Valley, and three hundred thousand lots that may be carved out of the encircling hills, which will comfortably and happily house a population of three million souls.

This is a big enough programme worthy the mettle of the best men of any generation.

To summarize,—there are three invulnerable reasons why we must not accept further annexed territory requiring water at this time:

1st: The political question of whether the neighboring towns help push the (Colorado problem) wagon or ride in the easy seats.

2nd: The engineering point of destroying our greatest reservoir.

3rd: The dishonest attitude that further annexations under present conditions puts us in with regard to the unoccupied lots of today within the present city boundaries.

The three points of benefit that follow a continuation of our time proven and nature balanced plan of spreading our surplus water, through irrigation into the gravel beds are as follows:

1st: The gain of great food supplies as a by-product of this policy.

2nd: The maintainence of a social welfare reserve to absorb the industrially unemployed.

3rd The provision for great growth and expansion within the present City limits.